STATEMENT OF UNITY FOR PROGRESSIVE LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TWO SPIRIT AND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE OF COLOR GATHERING

WE are a growing community of progressive lesbian, gay, bisexual, two spirit, transgender (LGBTST) people of color activists who are reactivating a dialogue around what has been a continuing and historical struggle - addressing the need for the creation of a national infrastructure that can give voice to the progressive vision and radical political analysis of LGBTST people of color. As organizers and activists, our collective energies have founded and provided critical leadership for LGBTST people of color and white-led organizations. We have not, however, developed a national infrastructure that would facilitate exchanging resources, crafting collective responses, calling our own conferences and gatherings, sharing skills, discussing policy and setting political priorities on a national level.

At the dawn of a new century, it is clear that the devastating and dehumanizing injustices that have characterized the modern era remain as deeply entrenched as ever. Poverty, economic exploitation, white supremacy, imperialism, misogyny, transphobia, homophobia and rampant violence may take new forms, but they continue to destroy us mentally, physically and spiritually. The resurgence of right wing movements around the world, the emergence of global capitalism, and the ever widening gap between haves and have nots make this a difficult time to keep radical movements alive.

As progressives, we are committed to social, racial and economic justice. Our vision is rooted in our longing for, and our right as individual human beings to be free, to be sheltered and fed, to love and be loved, to live without fear, to have equal opportunity for education and work, and to be treated as equals under the law. We acknowledge the roles of non-violent direct action, grassroots organizing and legislative and judicial strategies in the attainment of justice and civil rights. We also acknowledge the centrality of economic inequity, class privilege, profit for the few and poverty for the many in shaping all forms of oppression and the need to eradicate economic exploitation in order to fulfill the promise of equality and justice for all. We define a progressive, therefore, as someone who understands and actively organizes to make the links between social, racial and economic justice.

LGBTST people of color are embattled on many fronts. Daily, we must negotiate multiple identities and fight against multiple oppressions. Frequently, we do not feel at home in white-led lgbt communities, especially as that political movement becomes more and more corporate, mainstream, and conservative. Although we have at times successfully challenged homophobia and transphobia in poc communities, we have never carried out a unified campaign to eradicate homophobia and transphobia in communities of color. There is still a huge amount of work to be done in order for us to be fully respected as valued members of our various communities of origin.

Those of us working to organize this gathering, like many other people of color around the country, feel that it is time to take the next steps in our organizing to build a viable, autonomous strategy for liberation. The creation of a consciously progressive infrastructure to strengthen progressive LGBTST people of color organizing will allow us to better communicate with each other, help clarify and define our political priorities and enable us to do more effective international work with our sisters and brothers around the world.

In praise and in honor of our histories, our ancestors and our struggle, we will come together to build upon movements for liberation - globally and in the United States - that precede us. We will create community with those who share our vision of a world free of oppression and exploitation. We will fuel this movement with our energies, our spirits, our rage, our desires and our bodies. We will bring to it the stories of the world's peoples. We will bring our living experience of solidarity. We will bring the wisdom and courage of our ancestors. We will bring the rage of a "new world" history written with our blood. We will bring thousands of years of resistance to oppression. We will bring the courage and compassion and healing ways of our mothers. We will bring our vision for peace and its foundation in economic justice.

We will offer each other and the world a reasoned, progressive analysis of our lives and our times. We will challenge and refute the dominance of conservatives within and outside LGBTST circles in deciding the political agenda of our time.

We call upon all LGBTST people of color who can agree to the spirit of this statement to join us. We call upon you to think strategically about how to assert our leadership and defend our analysis of race, class, gender and sexual oppression. We call upon you to deepen this analysis and to design actions that will effectively challenge the narrow, single interest politics of the "mainstream lesbian & gay" movement and its insistence on representing all LGBTST people as white, economically privileged and "normal." We call upon you to join us in a democratic process for creating a gathering where we can celebrate our heritage of cultural diversity, our talents, our capacity to survive and our ability to lead. We call you to a gathering where we can share the joy and the hope of the rainbow.

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For information on joining this organizing effort contact:

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Regional/Local Coordinating Committee
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